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14. ABSTRACT Naval forward presence has been a mainstay of U.S. national security strategy since the end of World War II providing global presence, deterrence, and crisis response. Forward deployed Naval forces have consistently been stationed in the world's hotspots and are usually the first on the scene for emergent crises giving credence to the oft quoted line "Where are the carriers?" Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM both featured the striking power of the aircraft carrier and the surface combatants and submarines that comprise the carrier strike groups. These operations highlighted the inherent mobility and efficacy of U.S. Naval forces operating on the high seas and their unmatched ability to project power ashore. The U.S. Navy provided upwards of three aircraft carriers for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and seven aircraft carriers were deployed during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. These were monumental feats but were accomplished at great cost in current and future readiness. These operations led to the development of the Fleet Response Plan to provide the U.S. with consistent, credible, combat power that is inherently mobile and free to operate from the maritime domain. For the Fleet Response Plan to be effective and achieve its goals requires changing the Navy's personnel tempo of operations program/policy in order for the Navy to fight and win the Global War on Terrorism.					
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NAVAL FORWARD PRESENCE

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

Naval forward presence has been a mainstay of U.S. national security strategy since the end of World War II providing global presence, deterrence, and crisis response. Forward deployed Naval forces have consistently been stationed in the world's hotspots and are usually the first on the scene for emergent crises giving credence to the oft quoted line "Where are the carriers?" Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM both featured the striking power of the aircraft carrier and the surface combatants and submarines that comprise the carrier strike groups. These operations highlighted the inherent mobility and efficacy of U.S. Naval forces operating on the high seas and their unmatched ability to project power ashore. The U.S. Navy provided upwards of three aircraft carriers for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and seven aircraft carriers were deployed during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. These were monumental feats but were accomplished at great cost in current and future readiness. These operations led to the development of the Fleet Response Plan to provide the U.S. with consistent, credible, combat power that is inherently mobile and free to operate from the maritime domain. For the Fleet Response Plan to be effective and achieve its goals requires changing the Navy's personnel tempo of operations program/policy in order for the Navy to fight and win the Global War on Terrorism.

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INTRODUCTION

The United States Navy has consistently provided global forward presence to the geographic combatant commanders. When Operation ENDURING FREEDOM began in early October 2001, the United States Navy was constrained to providing three aircraft carriers out of its fleet of twelve. Eighteen months later, for the start of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, the Navy provided five aircraft carriers for the opening of that operation, with a sixth aircraft carrier en route, and a seventh aircraft carrier positioned in Northeast Asia to deter potential North Korean aggression while U.S. forces were focused in Southwest Asia.

In 2003, then Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Vern Clark, based on initial availability of forces for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM gave guidance to develop the Fleet Response Plan to improve the responsiveness of carrier strike groups.¹ As part of CNO's Guidance 2004, his expectation for the Fleet Response Plan (FRP) was to consistently provide for geographic combatant commanders and joint force commanders, "six employable carrier strike groups (CSGs), either forward deployed or ready to pulse, plus two additional CSGs in basic training that could deploy to fight in 90 days."² But what was the problem? Why was the Navy limited to three aircraft carriers in one situation, while providing upwards of seven in another? Was it an issue of force? Did we not have enough aircraft carriers? Or was it an issue of space and time? Were our Naval forces simply unable to sail from the continental United States to the area of operations in time?

¹ Fleet Forces Command, "Fleet Response Plan, Employing Rotational Forward Deployed, and Surge-Capable Forces," (U) Powerpoint, 15 June 2006, Norfolk, VA: Brief to House Armed Services Committee. (Secret) Information extracted is unclassified.

² U.S. Navy Office of Information, "Talking Points: Fleet Response Plan (FRP)," *Rhumb Lines, Straight Lines to Navigate By*, 08 January 2004, <http://www.navyleague.org/councils/rhumblines010804.doc> (accessed 30 September 2006).

The answer to these questions is heavily centered on the personnel tempo of operations or PERSTEMPO. The United States Navy's PERSTEMPO program was a key limiting factor in force availability for the combatant and joint force commanders for the start of the two operations. And although Admiral Clark advocated improved responsiveness of Naval forces with the introduction of the Fleet Response Plan, his testimony to a House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee reaffirmed his continuing commitment to the Navy PERSTEMPO program: "FRP... increase(s) the Navy's flexibility, but he repeated his commitment to six-month peacetime deployments."³ The Navy's adherence to the PERSTEMPO policy hinders the stated goals of the Fleet Response Plan and limits the balance between the operational factors of space, time and force.

This paper will analyze U.S. Naval forward presence and how it relates to crisis response; show how personnel tempo can constrain Naval operations; examine the goals of the Fleet Response Plan; and make recommendations to ensure that availability of the Navy's forces to the combatant commander is balanced with the operational factors of space and time.

NAVAL PRESENCE

The United States has maintained overseas Naval presence since World War II, perhaps "as much a product of historical precedent as of ...military necessity or requirements."⁴ Although overseas presence may have been an outgrowth of precedent, it became a core part of our national defense policy. "Naval forces ... provide a special means of projecting power ashore.... provide a presence -- a visible reminder of U.S. interest and

³ Walter T. Ham, IV, "Navy/Marine Corps Team to Revolutionize Naval Warfare," *All Hands*, no. 1047 (July 2004): 10.

⁴ Dov S. Zakheim and Andrew Hamilton, *U.S. Naval Forces: The Peacetime Presence Mission* (Washington, DC: Congressional Budget Office, December 1978), xii.

power in distant seas.”⁵ Forward deployments of Naval forces both reassure our allies and deter potential enemies. By positioning our Naval forces where they can engage the opposition in the event of hostilities, they further worldwide stability by providing a capable and powerful deterrent.⁶ As a “nation with global commitments and interests, the United States must maintain a strong forward defense posture. In order to carry out our forward defense strategy, U.S. Naval forces... must be capable -- and be seen as being capable -- of preserving our access to areas vital to our national interests in a timely manner and in the face of the most determined opposition.”⁷ This theme continued into the 21st Century, especially based on the outstanding performance the Navy and Marine Corps team demonstrated in Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM by exploiting the maritime domain to bring credible combat power ashore.

When one thinks of Naval forces, the phrase “Where are the carriers!?!?” often comes to mind. As former President Bill Clinton said on board the USS *Theodore Roosevelt*, “When word of a crisis breaks out in Washington, it’s no accident that the first question that comes to everyone’s lips is: ‘Where’s the nearest carrier?’”⁸ That fixation on aircraft carriers may be simplistic but certainly apt. The inherent lethality, mobility, and high visibility of aircraft carriers have symbolized the global power projection capability of the United States Navy since World War II. Until the advent of the Tomahawk land-attack missile (TLAM), the offensive capability of the Navy predominantly resided with the attack/strike aircraft aboard the aircraft carrier. However, aircraft carriers do not operate alone while forward

⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense to the Congress Fiscal Year 1976* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 05 February 1975), III-20.

⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense to the Congress Fiscal Year 1981* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 29 January 1980), 167.

⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense to the Congress Fiscal Year 1984* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 01 February 1983), 139.

⁸ GlobalSecurity.org, “Where are the Carriers?,” <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/where.htm> (accessed 07 October, 2006).

deployed, they are the center piece of carrier strike groups which include several TLAM capable surface combatants and attack submarines as integral elements. Furthermore, the Navy and Marine Corps team has transformed the amphibious ready group/Marine expeditionary unit (special operations capable) or ARG/MEU(SOC) into expeditionary strike groups (ESGs) through expanded command and control and the addition of strike capable surface combatants and submarines.

The combination of CSGs and ESGs provides the regional combatant commanders and joint force commanders with assets that have greater capability and flexibility to shape their areas of responsibility (AORs) across the range of military operations, from peacetime theater security cooperation to major combat operations. These forces are predominantly self-sustaining, and project “American sovereignty (giving) the U.S. Armed Forces the freedom of international, operational independence...(and the ability) to operate out of the international domain where we don’t need a permission slip.”⁹ Naval presence has been mandated as part of our national security strategy and the CSGs and ESGs make up the core of the Naval force that does the heavy lifting. So who determines when and where these forces go? Prior to the Goldwater/Nichols act of 1986, the Navy was the primary driving force for determining where forces deployed. And for many years, there was a perceived inertia that these locations were dictated by their strategic importance in previous generations vice current requirements.¹⁰ After Goldwater/Nichols, the Joint Staff assumed the role of honest broker that ensured forward presence was executed based on the direction of the national security strategy and the apportionment of a fair share of Naval assets to the regional combatant commanders and his joint force commanders based on justified requirements.

⁹ Walter T. Ham, IV, “CNO Says Navy Will Project American Sovereignty,” *Navy Newstand*, 04 October 2002, http://www.news.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=3710 (accessed 15 October 2006).

¹⁰ Zakheim and Hamilton, *The Peacetime Presence Mission*, 37.

In 1991 the Global Naval Force Presence Policy (GNFPP) was established to provide peacetime distribution of Naval resources to support geographic combatant commander's requirements. This policy was managed by the Joint Staff and produced a standing deployment order that was approved by the Secretary of Defense. The policy's intent was to manage routine Naval forward presence operations which were characterized by their predictive and reoccurring nature as well as frequent movement between the AORs.¹¹ The guiding principles of GNFPP were to exploit the inherent mobility of Naval forces; to maintain maximum operational flexibility; to balance valid shaping missions with crisis response; to maintain credible major theater war (MTW) surge capability; and to preserve PERSTEMPO to ensure long-term health of the force.¹² GNFPP was primarily focused on the deployment of the CSGs and ESGs, however the broad scope of the policy allowed for a trickle down effect that in fact led to the scheduling of nearly the entire Navy. This included nearly all surface combatants, the submarines attached to the CSGs and ESGs, the carrier airwings (CVWs) embarked on the aircraft carriers, the Marine expeditionary units embarked on the ESG amphibious ships, logistics support including Fleet oilers and replenishment ships, and shore-based aviation assets. Although the policy was created for peacetime use, it continued to be the scheduling mechanism used to schedule forces for major combat operations in the late 1990s and into the current decade. Regardless, the policy was the mechanism that transformed national strategy into assets for use by the combatant commander and joint force commander at the theater-strategic and operational level.

¹¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Global Naval Force Presence Policy (GNFPP) Brief to the Secretary of Defense," (U) Powerpoint, 15 August 2001, Arlington, VA (Secret) Information extracted is unclassified.

¹² Chief of Naval Operations Staff, "Global Naval Force Presence Policy," (U) Powerpoint, 13 November 2000, Arlington, VA (Secret) Information extracted is unclassified.

Since the end of the Vietnam War, Naval forces played a critical role at the operational level in deterring our enemies and assuring our friends and allies. During the 1970s and 1980s, the dominant U.S. strategy was the containment and balancing of the Soviet Union that carried through until the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. Throughout those years, the U.S. Navy operated to counter Soviet influence, predominantly along the periphery of the Eastern Bloc, from the Northeast Atlantic, through the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, throughout the Middle East, parts of the Indian Ocean, and in Northeast Asia. However, after the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979, much of the focus of U.S. national strategy shifted to the Arabian Gulf, which in turn increased engagement and presence in the region, eventually becoming the Navy's primary focus of effort, and only just beginning to abate in mid-2006. By operating in these regions, the Navy became well poised to respond to emergent situations that developed in each combatant commander's AOR.

CRISIS RESPONSE

In the past 30 years, Naval units have responded in nearly 200 named operations. These responses were divided into five categories in the database of Naval responses held by the Navy Command Center in the Chief of Naval Operations Staff (OPNAV) code N312 and further supplemented, corrected, and refined by the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) in several of their applicable studies. These responses are divided into five categories. The categories are: combat action, shows of force, contingency positioning, non-combatant evacuations (NEOs), and humanitarian assistance.¹³ Combat actions are those responses in which actual combat took place or weapons were fired. Shows of force are the responses in which U.S. Naval forces sailed into harm's way, though shots were not fired. Contingent

¹³ Chief of Naval Operations Databases and Document Library, "Database of Naval Responses to Situations," Excel. 01 July 2002, <http://classext1.cno.navy.smil.mil/n3/websec01.nsf/> (accessed 04 October 2006)

positioning responses were those that were characterized by diverting Naval ships from their schedules to position them closer to an arising situation. NEOs are for the protection of U.S. Embassies or the evacuation of U.S. and other approved personnel. Humanitarian assistance are those responses to natural disasters or other emergencies that are in an otherwise benign environment.¹⁴

Analysis of the databases has determined that all the responses stemmed from direction given by higher authority originating from the President and/or Secretary of Defense. All the situations were of sufficient concern that diverting Naval forces from their schedules was justified. Due to the high-level of attention that these situations manifested, use of Naval force was deemed necessary by the chain-of-command even though in hindsight it may now appear to have been an unwise course of action or simply not warranted the effort or attention given.¹⁵ Regardless of the decision making processes that drove the responses, analysis of the data determined that with the exception of Operations DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM and ALLIED FORCE, all of the nearly 200 responses to situations by Naval forces since the 1970s were executed by forces that were presently deployed in the AOR or already en route to the AOR as part of rotational forces. The databases and CNA study provide uncontested data on the credence and value of forward deployed forces.¹⁶

A different CNA study examined the same data and considered the 25 cases thought to be of the greatest strategic significance at the time or involved sizable U.S. forces. They examined whether warning times for these situations were so short that they predicated continuation of maintaining forward deployed forces. Warning time was measured from

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 12.

¹⁶ Ibid., 100.

when a situation broke in the world media until a U.S. operation began.¹⁷ CNA divided these cases into four categories:

1. “Out of the blue,” that is, with no warning.
2. “Peaks in messes.” A situation may have arisen slowly, and persisted, and the U.S. may have been concerned with it, but not until a serious incident occurred did the U.S. feel it had to deploy forces to take direct action in the situation. It may have been that the serious incident precipitated “the CNN effect,” or it may have been the excuse the administration was looking for.
3. In the “slowly gathering” cases, there were no particular incidents of such a magnitude as to trigger a U.S. response by U.S. forces. The responses became a matter of when the U.S. found the situation so intolerable that it decided to act.
4. Those where it was the U.S.’s choice of the time to initiate some action. That is warning time was not the problem since a situation existed beforehand and there was no precipitating attack or incident that the U.S. was responding to.¹⁸

Some of the significant cases that fall in the first category include the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, Iraq invading Kuwait, Iraq invading Iran, and the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. Cases in the second category include the bombing of the Marine barracks in Lebanon in 1982, China threatening Taiwan in 1996, and Operation ALLIED FORCE. The reflagging and escorting of the Kuwaiti tankers in 1987 and the seizure of Noriega in Panama in 1989 were from the third category. And Operation DESERT STORM and the initiation of Operation SOUTHERN WATCH were considered category four cases.¹⁹ As the categories above indicate, not all of the cases examined required immediate action, however when the military planning process for the situation began, again with the exception of Operations DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM and

¹⁷ Center for Naval Analyses, *Warning Time for U.S Forces’ Responses to Situations, A Selective Study*, H.H. Gaffney, (Alexandria, VA, June 2002), 1,3.

¹⁸ Ibid.,3.

¹⁹ Ibid., 3-4.

ALLIED FORCE, the forces selected to respond were either present within the effected combatant commander's AOR or located in the adjacent AORs. In the case of Operation DESERT SHIELD, it was essentially an operation to defend Saudi Arabia and in the case of DESERT STORM, that operation followed a long debate on the merits of using force or economic sanctions to oust Iraq from Kuwait. Both operations involved a slow and overt build up of forces. The peculiarity of Operation ALLIED FORCE is covered below under PERSTEMPO.

The CNA studies described above and the OPNAV response to situations database validate that the “Naval response patterns largely fall out of presence and deterrence. That is, the United States is able to respond to situations because we deploy our ships globally on a constant basis.”²⁰ Otherwise, without global presence the factors of space and time, specifically ship transit speeds and the distances from U.S. Navy homeports to crisis locations would prohibit timely response. For example, the distance from Norfolk, Virginia to the Strait of Hormuz is just over 8,200 nautical miles via the Suez Canal. That distance is over 11,600 nautical miles if the Suez Canal is unavailable. Transit time using OPNAV crisis response planning speed of 20 knots is over 17 days via the Suez and over 24 days around the Cape of Good Hope. For responses from San Diego, California, the distance to the Strait of Hormuz via the Strait of Malacca is again over 11,600 nautical miles, requiring over 24 days to respond at 20 knots.²¹ Of course these response times assume that these units are fully ready, that an aircraft carrier has its airwing embarked and the aviators are all current in their carrier landing qualifications. If not, additional days are required prior

²⁰ Center for Naval Analyses, *U.S. Naval Responses to Situations, 1970-1999*, H.H. Gaffney, (Alexandria, VA, December 2000), 118.

²¹ Chief of Naval Operations, “Policy on Distances and Transit Times for Forward Presence and Crisis Response (Revision 2),” OPNAV MEM 3530 Ser. N512J/7U604104 (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, DCNO N3/N5, 12 March 1997).

to sailing. Those response days from one point to another are simply time/distance/speed problems and do not take into account the delays en route weather and heavy seas cause nor do they guarantee the material readiness of the vessels when they arrive, especially after the wear and tear the ships will take by sustaining high speeds of advance for extended periods. Additionally some ships, specifically, the older amphibious ships simply cannot sustain speeds that high.

Given the limitations described above, how was the Navy able to provide the three aircraft carriers for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and the seven forward deployed aircraft carriers for Operation Iraqi Freedom? In the former case, the attacks by terrorists on 11 September 2001 happened to coincide with several scheduled events. First, the turnover between the USS *Enterprise* Strike Group and the USS *Carl Vinson* Strike Group was scheduled for 12 September 2001 in the North Arabian Sea.²² Additionally, the USS *Theodore Roosevelt* Strike Group was scheduled to deploy on 19 September 2001 to participate in Exercise BRIGHT STAR 02 with Egypt in October 2001. The *Theodore Roosevelt* CSG was eventually released from participating in the exercise and relieved the *Enterprise* CSG in the North Arabian Sea in late October to allow *Enterprise* to return to the U.S.²³ In mid-October, USS *Kitty Hawk* and an escort ship arrived from Yokosuka, Japan not in the role as a striking aircraft carrier but as an afloat forward staging base (AFSB) to support special operations forces (SOF).²⁴ The reality was that for the majority of the month of October, the United States had four aircraft carriers in the Central Command AOR due to the coincident timing of CSG turnover and scheduled deployments. Therefore the number of aircraft carriers available for the combatant commander was really not an issue.

²² Rebecca Grant, *Battle-Tested, Carrier Aviation in Afghanistan and Iraq*, (Washington, DC; IRIS, 2005), 27.

²³ R.F. Keledei, personal recollection of author, October 2001.

²⁴ Grant, *Battle-Tested*, 36-37.

The reason that *Enterprise* left with the arrival of *Theodore Roosevelt* was so that she could return home and minimize the total amount of days her crew would exceed the Navy's personnel tempo policy.

PERSTEMPO

The Navy's personnel tempo of operations program is built around three goals:

1. Maximum deployment length of six months, portal to portal.
2. Minimum 2.0:1 Turn Around Ratio (TAR) between deployments.
3. Minimum of 50 percent time in homeport for a unit over a 5-year cycle calculated 3 years back and 2 years forward based on current schedules.²⁵

The PERSTEMPO policy applies in peace and in war and requires detailed justification for approval by the CNO to exceed deployment length and TAR. As written in the Global Naval Force Presence Policy: "For scheduling purposes, CNO PERSTEMPO policy remains inviolate."²⁶ PERSTEMPO was the driving factor for the expedited return of the *Enterprise* from Operation ENDURING FREEDOM; however there are other examples of the primacy of the PERSTEMPO program over operational requirements for forces in recent years.

During the run up to Operation ALLIED FORCE, the USS *Theodore Roosevelt* CSG was scheduled to deploy in April 1999 to relieve the USS *Enterprise* in the Arabian Gulf. Instead, *Theodore Roosevelt* deployed two weeks earlier than expected, transited the Atlantic Ocean at 32 knots, and still arrived two weeks after the start of the operation. The domino effect was that the USS *Kitty Hawk* had to surge to the Gulf from Japan to relieve *Enterprise* in substitution for the *Theodore Roosevelt*. The irony is that *Enterprise* could have conducted the Kosovo operation on time by delaying in the Adriatic Sea en route from the

²⁵ Chief of Naval Operations, "Personnel Tempo of Operations," OPNAVINST 3000.13B (Washington Dc; Department of the Navy, CNO, 11 February 2000).

²⁶ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. To CINCUSACOM, message 111745Z DEC 98, 11 December 1998.

Arabian Gulf, but since the Navy did not want to break her PERSTEMPO, she sailed back home.²⁷

One of CNA's major observations in their crisis response analyses was that the "U.S. is not breaking OPTEMPO/PERSTEMPO. However: Naval ships appear to have missed a lot of port calls; there may have been some rapid transits across the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans; the ships were diverted from scheduled activities, including exercises, port calls, and engagement with other countries."²⁸ In each of the years between Operation DESERT STORM and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, PERSTEMPO exceptions were granted by the CNO in the single digits. The only exception was in 1994 for operations supporting Haiti when there were approximately 18 PERSTEMPO exceptions granted. Eventually, the CNO granted approximately 37 PERSTEMPO exceptions in 2002 for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, predominantly to the units comprising the *Enterprise*, *Carl Vinson*, *Theodore Roosevelt*, and *John C. Stennis* CSGs and the *Peleliu*, *Bataan*, and *Bonhomme Richard* ESGs.²⁹

The CNO relented when it came to planning for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and allowed Navy planners to ignore the constraints imposed by the PERSTEMPO program for six-month deployment lengths and the 2.0:1 turn-around ratio requirement. This freedom to think outside the box when it came to planning for possible combat against Iraq resulted in the deployment of five aircraft carriers for the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, with the sixth en route to relieve the *Abraham Lincoln* and a seventh on station in Northeast Asia.

²⁷ Center for Naval Analyses, *U.S. Naval Responses to Situations, 1970-1999*, H.H. Gaffney, (Alexandria, VA, December 2000), 100.

²⁸ Center for Naval Analyses, *U.S. Naval Responses to Situations, 1970-1999*, H.H. Gaffney, (Alexandria, VA, December 2000), 100.

²⁹ Chief of Naval Operations, "U.S. Navy Perstempo Briefing," Powerpoint, February 2004: Brief to Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS).

The *Abraham Lincoln* CSG's deployment of greater than nine months was record setting and was the longest Navy deployment in nearly 30 years.³⁰ In 2003 and 2004, the CNO granted at a minimum 146 PERSTEMPO exceptions for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.³¹

The unsung hero however amongst the deployed aircraft carriers was the *USS Carl Vinson*. After her success in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, she returned to Washington State and was put through a compressed maintenance availability, completing a normally six-month long cycle in five. Additionally, the CSG was tasked to expedite their inter-deployment training cycle (IDTC) that normally took seven to eight months to complete. By cutting out all possible spare days in the training cycle and attempting to complete every task without respite, the *Carl Vinson* CSG completed their required readiness training in four months. As a reward, she deployed to Northeast Asia as a deterrent force while the *Kitty Hawk* CSG deployed to the Arabian Gulf for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. For her troubles, *Carl Vinson* deployed for over eight months but without the combat experiences the other CSGs received for IRAQI FREEDOM. However the flexibility displayed and hard work demonstrated by the crew of that aircraft carrier became the bedrock for change that eventually became the Fleet Response Plan.

FLEET RESPONSE PLAN

Although the Navy was able to generate seven aircraft carriers for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM through innovative scheduling and the removal of many planning constraints, the perception for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM was that the Naval force was not efficient enough. This may be attributed to the fact that although there were two CSGs in the North Arabian Gulf on 11 September 2001, there were a total of nine aircraft carriers in port, with a

³⁰ “U.S. Fleet Returning Home – Around the Fleet,” *All Hands*, no. 1034 (June 2003).

³¹ Chief of Naval Operations, “U.S. Navy Perstempo Briefing,” Powerpoint, February 2004: Brief to Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS).

tenth just returning from deployment. In the Pacific Fleet, two aircraft carriers were in port in San Diego – the USS *Nimitz*, and the USS *John C Stennis* with the USS *Constellation* just returning from deployment and en route from Hawaii to San Diego. The USS *Abraham Lincoln* was five months into a six-month maintenance cycle in Washington State and the USS *Kitty Hawk* was in port Japan. In the Atlantic Fleet, the USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* was in overhaul, the USS *George Washington* had just completed a six-month maintenance cycle the previous month while the USS *Harry S Truman* was just entering one and the USS *John F. Kennedy* was struggling with her engineering plant. Only the USS *Theodore Roosevelt* was a full up round, scheduled to deploy the following week. Although USS *Constellation* was in the process of just returning from deployment, she had offloaded her munitions in Hawaii and did not possess any firepower.³² The political pressures from civilian leadership on why the Navy could only muster two aircraft carriers on the one of the most infamous days in modern world history became the catalyst for FRP.

Born of the desire to rapidly deploy more than one CSG from the continental U.S. on short notice in order to increase Navy combat power overseas, FRP enables a flexible, scalable and rapidly deployable force while continuing to prepare rotational deployments in support of global force presence. FRP is designed to more rapidly develop, then sustain targeted readiness aboard ships and in squadrons and air wings by adjusting necessary training and, in some cases, accelerating certifications and schedules. It requires us to rethink how we maintain our ships and aircraft between deployments without spending more money for readiness and maintenance or placing additional burdens on the shoulders of our sailors.

A key aspect of FRP is the notion of targeted readiness rather than assuming a requirement to aim for the highest readiness levels. In many instances, absent indications of imminent danger, intermediate levels of readiness are not only acceptable but prudent uses of resources.³³

³² Brad Garber, conversation with author, October 2001.

³³ William J. Fallon, “The Navy’s New Operational Construct,” *The Hook Magazine*, (Spring 2004), http://www.tailhook.org/Brf_Sp04.htm (accessed 21 October 2006).

The bottom line is that FRP would increase operational availability of forces.³⁴ The forces that FRP produced would be both rotational forces and ready forces that would respond to short-notice combatant commander demands for both major combat operations and for theater security cooperation plans shaping and deterrence missions (Phase 0). Additionally, Naval forces would be on the forefront for maritime security and the Global War on Terrorism as well as maritime homeland defense/homeland security.

Although the potential gains are tremendous, the constraint of the Navy's PERSTEMPO policy reduces those gains to nil. For example, if through the efficiencies realized through the FRP a unit was employable for 12 months in a 24 month FRP cycle. Regardless of the employability window, the maximum that crew and unit could deploy would still be six months. In an age where our compatriots in the Army and Marine Corps are deploying for over a year into the combat zones of Iraq and Afghanistan, it is unconscionable to limit Navy deployment lengths to six-month periods based on a policy rather than on operational requirements.

RECOMMENDATION

Revamp the personnel tempo of operations program. The current baselines of six-month maximum deployment lengths and 2.0:1 turn-around ratios do not give Naval forces the flexibility to surge and therefore defeats the efficacy of the Fleet Response Program. As described above, the best use of Naval power is through forward presence with rotating forces to dissuade and deter potential enemies and to monitor the ungoverned spaces that terrorists and insurgents use to spread their influence. Forward Naval presence has also been

³⁴ U.S. Navy Office of Information, "Talking Points: Fleet Response Plan (FRP)," *Rhumb Lines, Straight Lines to Navigate By*, 08 January 2004, <http://www.navyleague.org/councils/rhumblines010804.doc> (accessed 30 September 2006).

the response tool that the United States has relied upon over and over again to diffuse and thwart arising situations both large and small throughout the world.

As force levels remain static or decline, increasing the time deployed or time available to deploy is the only way to balance the tyranny of distance from our shores to those ungoverned spaces. By limiting deployments to six-months, West Coast units spend half their deployment just transiting to and from the Central Command AOR. With seven month deployments, the current level of force structure could maintain a more robust forward presence with the nearly the same amount of strain. With the turn around ratio abolished, units could deploy on multiple shorter duration deployments within their availability window and maintain a 50% at home tempo. Maritime Homeland Defense and Homeland Security both begin overseas. Our deployed Naval forces must project power to keep terrorists and global insurgents off balance and on the defensive. By maintaining a maximum of six-month deployments the Navy limits each unit's forward posture and correspondingly diminishes the depth that we can extend our battle space from the continental U.S.

Although the goal to maintain quality of life (QOL) is applauded, QOL should not take primacy over winning the Global War on Terrorism. Naval forces and personnel must be prepared to make greater sacrifices on par with servicemen and women from the other services.

CONCLUSION

Forward presence matters. Presence can equate to positive influence with our friends, allies and coalition partners or presence can be deterrence against regional powers, terrorists, global insurgents, and criminals operating in ungoverned spaces. Naval presence can support the other aspects of national power either kinetically or non-kinetically. Part and parcel of

forward presence is the ability to respond to crises and/or situations. Virtually every situation that the U.S. Navy has responded to in the last 30-35 years has been executed by forward deployed forces.

With the long lead time it takes to obtain diplomatic clearance to obtain access in much of the world, sea power gives the United States an afloat base to project power, influence, and deterrence ashore. The Navy and Naval forces are inherently mobile, flexible and lethal. With the Fleet Response Plan, the Naval forces will realize more capability to forward deploy or surge in response to crises. With increased resources, maritime forces can project power and ensure Homeland Defense and Security far from our shores. However the limitations of PERSTEMPO must be considered and changed to maximize the efficiency gained by the Fleet Response Plan. The factor of space is static when it comes to physical distances to traverse. Therefore our valuable forces must be afforded more time on station or en route from our shores to the ungoverned spaces where they can enforce our national security strategy and provide safety for our own shores.

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